

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00  
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 DHA-02  
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R 101130Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3476

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4750

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AF

SUBJECT: EXECUTION OF THREE "SUBVERSIVES" ANNOUNCED

1. KABUL TIMES (KT) JULY 5 CARRIED A LENGTHY STORY THAT, INTER ALIA, ANNOUNCED THE EXECUTION OF THREE SUBVERSIVES WHO HAD BEEN MEMBERS OF A GROUP CONVICTED OF SEEKING TO SPREAD DISORDER IN PARWAN, LAGHMAN, NANGARHAR, KONAR AND PAKTIA PROVINCES. THE STORY POINTED OUT THAT THE ARREST OF MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED ON THE EVENING OF JULY 27, 1975 -- ABOUT THE TIME OF THE PANJSHIR UPRISING -- BUT CURIOUSLY OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO THE DATE OF THESE EXECUTIONS. THE ARTICLE ADDED THAT THE DEATH SENTENCES OF 21 OTHERS HAVE BEEN COMMUTED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT, WHILE 46 DEFENDENTS HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO FROM 8 TO 18 YEARS IN PRISON. THE ARTICLE STATED THAT 17 PRISONERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THEIR 12 TO 18 MONTH SENTENCES, AND CONCLUDED WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT 16 OF THE ACCUSED HAVE BEEN ACQUITTED.

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2. COMMENT: THERE ARE SEVERAL INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THIS STORY, NOT ALL OF WHICH ARE COMPLETELY CLEAR AS YET. IN THE PAST, THE JESHYN HOLIDAY (JULY 17) PERIOD HAS USUALLY BEEN A TIME OF INTENSE RUMORS REGARDING COUPS D'ETAT, ASSASSINATIONS, OR OTHER CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT, AND IT SEEMS REASONABLY SAFE TO

PRESUME THAT THE REGIME (THROUGH THE PUBLICA-  
TION OF THIS PARTICULAR STORY) WANTED TO REFRESH  
THE MEMORIES OF THOSE WHO MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN  
THAT ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY CAN HAVE SERIOUS  
CONSEQUENCES IN AFGHANISTAN. IN ADDITION,  
EVEN THOUGH IT IS ON KT'S BACK PAGE, THE SPACE  
DEVOTED TO THE STORY -- ALL 103 DEFENDANTS,  
AS WELL AS THEIR FATHERS, ARE LISTED, FOR A TOTAL  
OF ABOUT 40 COLUMN INCHES -- WOULD TEND TO INSURE  
THAT THE REGULAR AFGHAN READER WOULD NOT OVERLOOK  
THIS PIECE OF NEWS. IN THIS REGARD, WE HAVE  
RECEIVED A REPORT THAT IN LATE JUNE THE GOVERN-  
MENT ARRESTED SEVERAL PERSONS FOR POSSIBLE ANTI-  
REGIME ACTIVITIES, AND UNCOVERED A CACHE OF  
EXPLOSIVES NEAR THE PANJSHIR VALLEY, THE SCENE  
OF THE 1975 POLITICAL DISTURBANCES; THREE OTHER  
PERSONS REPORTEDLY ESCAPED ARREST. IT COULD BE  
THAT THIS INCIDENT PROMPTED THE GOVERNMENT TO  
GO PUBLIC WITH ITS NOT SO WELL-VEILED WARNING.

3. THE TIMING OF THE EXECUTIONS THEMSELVES IS  
ALSO UNCLEAR. EVEN THOUGH THE DATES OF THE  
VARIOUS TRIALS AND EXECUTIONS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN  
THE KT ARTICLE, THE TONE, COUPLED WITH THE ANNOUNCE-  
MENT THAT SOME DEFENDANTS HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED  
18-MONTH SENTENCES, WOULD TEND TO CONVEY THE  
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IMPRESSION THAT THESE EVENTS TOOK PLACE AT LEAST  
MANY MONTHS AGO. RECENTLY, WE HAVE RECEIVED ONE  
REPORT, HOWEVER, THAT THREE MEN -- WITH NAMES  
IDENTICAL TO THOSE INCLUDED IN THE KT ARTICLE --  
WERE EXECUTED BETWEEN JUNE 12 AND 18 OF THIS  
YEAR. THESE EXECUTIONS WERE REPORTEDLY CARRIED  
OUT BECAUSE THE AUTHORITIES WERE CONVINCED THAT  
THE THREE, DESPITE THEIR INCARCERATION, WERE  
CONTINUING THEIR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES AND WERE  
SEEKING NEW RECRUITS TO THEIR CAUSE. RELEASING  
THE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE EXECUTIONS AT THIS  
TIME -- IN ADDITION TO THE GOALS MENTIONED ABOVE --  
COULD HAVE BEEN A GOVERNMENTAL ATTEMPT TO PREEMPT  
THE UNAUTHORIZED LEAKING OF THE STORY, AND TO  
AVOID, IF POSSIBLE, THE FORMATION OF THE USUAL  
EXAGGERATED RUMORS WHICH NORMALLY SURROUND  
EVENTS OF THIS TYPE.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE COMMUTATION OF 21  
DEATH SENTENCES, THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT 17 OF  
THE GROUP HAVE ALREADY BEEN RELEASED, AND THE  
NEWS THAT 16 HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN ACQUITTED, CON-

CEIVABLY COULD BE LOOKED UPON BY SOME OBSERVERS  
AS EVIDENCE THAT THIS REGIME IS NOT OPPRESSIVELY  
HEAVY-HANDED, BUT, CONVERSELY, THAT IT IS SCRUPULOUSLY  
SAFE-GUARDING THE LEGITIMATE LEGAL RIGHTS OF ALL  
ACCUSED, AND, MOREOVER, THAT THE DAOUD GOVERNMENT  
CAN EVEN BE BENEVOLENT TO THOSE CONVICTED OF  
PLOTING ITS OVERTHROW. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN,  
HOWEVER, WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT HAD THIS  
VIEWPOINT IN MIND AS IT CONSIDERED THE PUBLICATION  
OF THIS ARTICLE.

5. AS FOR THE POST-EXECUTION STATUS QUO, WAHEED  
ABDULLAH, MINISTER-IN-CHARGE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
IN A JULY 9 DISCUSSION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, MADE  
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THE PERHAPS UNINTENTIONALLY REVEALING REMARK THAT  
"WE NOW HAVE ONLY 95 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN AFGHAN-  
ISTAN."  
ELIOT

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## Message Attributes

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